

Will the broadcast flag interfere with consumers ability to make copies of DTV content for their personal use, either on personal video recorders or removable media?

There is no way for the technology to know whether the copying would be legitimate or for personal use. If it protects against illegitimate or public use, then it would have to block personal legitimate use as well. Recently, AT&T announced that users were stealing cable if they didn't watch the commercials. If I decided to record a show so I could watch it when I got off work, it would be recording the commercials as well -- thus paying via cable bill and paying again via commercials. If we are not allowed to make copies of what we are paying for, perhaps there should be no cable bill and/or commercials?

Would the digital flag interfere with consumers ability to send DTV content across networks, such as home digital networks connecting digital set top boxes, digital recorders, digital servers and digital display devices? As someone with an eye for creating a true "Smart Home", I have already stumbled across areas where the current protection causes problems. The TV contains 2 inputs. For that, we have the DVD, the VCR, the CABLE box, the Playstation, the Dreamcast, the N64, the Genesis, and output from the computer. Since there are only two inputs, we have to redirect some of them through the VCR, which has 3 additional inputs. Even with this, we have to unplug and replug things in to switch consoles. The DVD player, however, requires that it be directly plugged into the TV -- since the copy protection built into the device will not allow it to work if it is routed through the VCR. When I bought the DVD player at Best Buy, they TOLD me that I had to buy a Hi-Fi VCR to plug it into the TV. I did so, and found out that it wasn't possible. With each additional "protection" added to the media, it increases the difficulty for the consumer to purchase new technologies and implement them at home.

Would the broadcast flag requirement limit consumers ability to use their existing electronic equipment (equipment not built to look for the flag) or make it difficult to use older components with new equipment that is compliant with the broadcast flag standard?

Although I do not have the answer to this directly, as a consumer, I would *expect* it to behave the same way the DVD player did in question #2. In addition, I recently bought an ATI All-In-Wonder 128 Pro, so that I could watch TV on the computer and record the computer to VHS. Currently, it allows me to watch SOME of the channels I pay for. I would not be able to watch ANY channels if I switched to satellite. As a consumer, when I read "cable-ready", I assumed it would work with cable. Not "part of" and "certain" cable networks. If hardware changes are made, then packaging should OBVIOUSLY explain to the consumer what it would and would not work with, so that they can better determine whether to use or avoid the technology. In addition, if it would limit the ability of me using the VCR that I bought, then I think the media distributors should be required to lower cost since we get less value from it.

Would a broadcast flag requirement limit the development of future equipment providing consumers with new options?

It would slow down the development of technology until a new group comes out with an alternative -- as normally happens in the tech industry. When the industry is impeded, people invent new ways to replace it -- but it does slow down technology.

What will be the cost impact, if any, that a broadcast flag requirement would have on consumer electronics equipment?

Manufacturers would increase cost, thus increasing cost for the Suppliers, who increase cost for the Stores, whom increase costs for the consumer. Basic economics. In addition, broadcasters, adding technology, would also increase costs. Those getting funding would also need additional funding, thus needing increased taxes to cover the new costs.

Other Comments:

Every day that I read about a new digital rights issue on slashdot (www.slashdot.org). I read about Hollywood being deputized so they can legally hack into consumers computers. I read about information being protected so that large conglomerates make more money while the consumer has fewer rights. I read about the Patent Office issuing patents for things that are currently in popular use. I find websites that ban US citizens (like thefreeworld.net) due to the DMCA. Every day I read articles about why people (students, librarians, the average citizen) thinks the government is corrupt and taking away all our rights. Very few people, without a vested interest, agree with any of these information-restrictions. Many people disagree, and most are unaware. Look at how many people petitioned to stop the V-Chip or the Communications Decency Act. The People do not want limitations to their rights or to information. The People would prefer an Online Library of Alexandria, where all information is free. Our current model, with patents/copyrights and intellectual property, limit the growth and power of the United States because it limits technological advancement and pushes the consumer away. As I stated in a letter to the National Science Foundation, our country would be more technologically advanced if we were to guarantee that non-personal information was public -- thus allowing the youth coming out of college to design new technologies at a much greater speed. Instead, many people re-invent the wheel because the current Patents or Copyrights prevent them from learning from mistakes previously made. I think the consumers are working towards replacing the current industry with open versions. Formats like OGG allow artists to express themselves without being slaves to the RIAA. Licenses like BSD, MIT, Apache, Artistic, or even the GPL allow programmers to express themselves without being slaves to companies like Microsoft. Digital Rights Management do not assist or protect the public, but only provide consumers with a desire to replace the industries.